

**CHANGES TO DISCHARGE MEDICATION ARRANGEMENTS**

The Northern Territory Government has signed an agreement with the Australian Government, as have all other states and the ACT, to join the Pharmaceutical Reform Agenda.

Public Hospital Pharmacies in the Northern Territory have been given approval to dispense and claim payment for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) items under section 94 of the National Health Act 1953. This limits them to dispensing hospital prescriptions only.

NT hospitals do not have approval for S100 supply of medication for remote community patients.

The Pharmaceutical Reform Agenda consists of two parts. Firstly, access to the PBS for medications for patients on discharge and public outpatients. Secondly, there is requirement to meet the milestones and indicators agreed upon by the Territory hospitals for implementing the Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Council (APAC) Guidelines.

**With introduction of the PBS into public hospitals, patients will receive up to one month's supply of medicines from the hospital upon discharge. The hospitals will supply the standard PBS quantity and patients will pay a co-payment similar to community pharmacy.**

**Key Points for Remote Medical Officers and Health Centre Clinical Staff Prescribing**

- Hospital doctors will be able to prescribe PBS quantity of medications for up to ONE month or as clinically appropriate.

**Dispensing**

- Hospital pharmacy will dispense the items in accordance to PBS regulations.
- While hospitals will supply one month of medication, remote health patients on a dose administration aid (DAA), will generally receive 7 days<sup>1</sup> worth of medication in DAA form, with the remainder of supply transferred to the regular pharmacy to be packed in a DAA. There are exceptions to this arrangement when:
  - the pharmacy cannot supply medication to those patients who abscond or who are discharged after hours.
  - the pharmacy will supply the full course of medication where patients are prescribed a short term medication for longer than seven days (eg a ten day course).
- Hospital pharmacy will continue to supply 7-day medications in DAA for high-risk patients. These include patients on >4 oral medications, >55 year old Indigenous or >65 year old Non-Indigenous patients, patients requiring therapeutic drug monitoring or on complex drug regimens.

**Co-payments**

- Patients will make co-payment for discharge and outpatient medications similar to community pharmacy model.
- The Commonwealth Government nominates the co-payment amount annually. Prices for 2009 are \$5.30 per item for patients with concession/health care card and \$32.90 per item for general patients.

<sup>1</sup> This is subject to negotiation at time of print

Developed by: Pharmaceutical Reform Agenda Implementation Pharmacist	Page 1	Reviewed:
Endorsed by: Professional Practice Coordinator, Chief Rural Medical Practitioner		
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- Patients will pay for up to 4 items only, subject to annual review by DHF.
- Both PBS and non-PBS items prescribed on hospital prescription will be subject to identical payment structure, depending on patient status e.g. concession/pension card holders will pay \$5.30 per item for first 4 items both PBS and non-PBS items alike.

**Payment Options**

- Patients receiving Centrelink benefits can nominate to pay via direct debit from their Centre-pay account. The Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs), social workers and ward clerks will assist the patients in completing the form during their stay in the hospital.
- Patients who may not elect or be eligible for Centrepay benefits can opt to pay via Cash or EFTPOS at the hospital pharmacy on the day or at RDH Pharmacy during working hours (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm) within 28 days of receiving the invoice. Credit card payments over the phone or in person will also be accepted

**New requirements**

Patients will need to have valid Medicare Card and Concession Card Numbers. Remote Health staff are asked to ensure that these numbers are updated on the patient's medical record before they are sent to hospital.

**Patient Information Campaign**

A DHF advertising campaign is running on Radio (BRACS), TV (free to air community announcements) and Newspaper (NT News).

For further information, please contact Sunny Duggal (RDH Pharmacy) on 08 8922 8842

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